DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 102 516 CS 001 638

AUTHOR Dyer, Maxwell
TITLE MSRTS (Migrant Student Record Transfer System): A Marriage of Education and Technology for Migrant Children.
PUB DATE Jan 75
NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southwestern Regional Conference of the International Reading Association (5th, Phoenix, January 23-25, 1975)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Records; Elementary Secondary Education; *Information Networks; *Migrant Child Education; Migrant Children; *Migrant Health Services; Recordkeeping; *Student Records
IDENTIFIERS *Migrant Student Record Transfer System

ABSTRACT

The Migrant Student Record Transfer System (MSRTS) is an automated telecommunication system that has associated the 48 contiguous states and Puerto Rico to provide continuity of educational and health programs for the more than one million children of seasonal migrant workers. The purposes of MSRTS are (1) to provide rapidly appropriate public school personnel with pertinent educational and health information on the children as they move from school to school, and (2) to provide management data to administrative personnel in planning academic and health programs for them. The system is funded under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and is serviced by a computer operated by the Arkansas Department of Education. MSRTS headquarters provides technical training services for personnel in all of the participating state departments of education, the terminal operators, and regional and local service personnel such as administrators, teachers, councelors, nurses, and others. Three major kinds of records are provided to schools upon request: a report of urgent health needs, the student's cumulative record, and a detailed health problem list. (TO)

ED1025516

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Maxwell Dyer
TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER."

MSRTS: A MARRIAGE OF EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGY FOR MIGRANT CHILDREN

Maxwell Dyer, Coordinator of MSRTS

For the first time in American history, a marriage of education and technology has become a reality on a nationwide basis. The name of this cooperative venture is the Migrant Student Record Transfer System (MSRTS). The MSRTS is an automated telecommunication system that has, as of this writing, associated the 48 contiguous states and the trust territory of Puerto Rico into one giant school district that has put an unusual thrust behind efforts to provide continuity of educational and health programs for the one million plus children of seasonal migrant workers of America. Seasonal migrant workers in this case mean those who are involved in farming and fishing on a seasonal basis. The purposes of MSRTS are to rapidly provide appropriate public school personnel with pertinent educational and health information on children of seasonal migrant workers as they move from school to school and to provide management data to administrative personnel in planning academic and health programs for them.

The movement of these workers has in the past taken thier children to an average of three to four schools during a school term. This pattern has meant short tenure at many of the schools, thus seriously disrupting the continuity of educational and health services normally provided for settled children.

The process of deciding on an appropriate program for a migrant student in school usually requires several days. Many times the migrant child will have already moved on to another school before the evaluation process has been

CS 001 638

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

completed and a program of study developed for him. Too, because of a lack of background information, migrant children have either received little or no medical attention or were given multiple inoculations for the same disease. The former proved detrimental to normal growth and development; the latter proved to be discouraging to the child's school attendance because of the fear of getting more "shots."

During a calendar year farm migrant children may be found at almost any place in the nation. The movement pattern, however, is that most of the migrant children generally reside in the southern latitude states during the winter months and move to the northern tier of states during the late spring, summer and early fall months following crop harvests. Upon completion of northern harvests, there is a large southward migration to their home bases. Relative to this migration the U.S. Office of Education says:

> As the northern orchards and fields go into winter dormancy and thousands of migratory agricultural workers follow the sun southward, school administrators in the warmer harvest areas struggle to absorb the migrants' offspring into the local schools. All too often in the past, the Nation's migrant children have been lost in the shuffle, their school and health records misplaced or nonexistent, the children falling further and further behind until they end up among the 90 percent of migrant children who never finish high school.

MSRTS offers a solution to the lack of background information for agricultural migrant children and it makes provisions for the information on a rapid transmittal basis. The 48 states are associated by a telecommunication network of 137 teletype terminals that are strategically located in areas of high concentrations of migrant farm workers. These terminals provide the means through which schools both request accumulated student data and enter new information

about each migrant student in their care. This contemporary use of technology makes possible the receipt of pertinent student data within a few hours of his enrollment in a school.

The nationwide communication System is serviced by a computer operated by the Arkansas Department of Education, in Little Rock, Arkansas. To complement the automated System, MSRTS headquarters provides technical training services for personnel in all of the participating state departments of education, the terminal operators, and regional and local service personnel such as administrators, teachers, counselors, nurses, etc.

The total service of MSRTS is funded upon authorization of Public Law 89-750 of 1966 which is an amendment to Public Law 89-10 of 1965, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. By competitive bid the U.S. Office of Education entered into a contract with the Arkansas Department of Education to develop and operate the System.

In passing Public Law 89-750 amendment Congress expressed concern about the educational and health welfare of migrant children and mandated that a record transferal system be created. Upon receiving funding for migrant programs the state directors of migrant education assumed the initiative to create a functional system of inf rmation transferal from school to school among the several states by requesting the U.S. Office of Education to use some of the national migrant funds to contract for the record transferal service and by developing student record forms that were acceptable to all participating states.

There are three primary communications elements that comprise MSRTS: Schools, terminal operators and the computerized data bank. Schools initiate all information that is entered into a student's data base record. Information is sent from a school to a teletypewriter terminal operator who serves that school. Eac terminal operator serves many schools. The terminal operator prepares the

information for transmission by wire to the computer. After the data is processed by the computer it sends the appropriate responses to the terminal operator and prepares the appropriate student records for mailing to the schools. All student records are mailed by MSRTS on the day following the receipt of information from the terminal operator.

With all three communications elements functioning punctually the time required to learn a migrant child's background is minimized and the instructional time at a particular school is maximized. Three major kinds of records are provided upon request to schools:

1. The Critical Data Report is provided immediately to the terminal that serves the school for subsequent transmittal to the school for use in the initial placement and care of each student. This report includes critical health data for use by schools in meeting the urgent health needs of its migrant children during the two to four days required for delivery of the current cumulative records.

2. The Uniform Migrant Student Transfer Form, commonly known as the Transfer Record (TR), is the System's cumulative record. It is sent by U.S. Mail to each student's present school of enrollment. The TR is usually received by the requesting school in about three days of its request for the record. This record contains the following major kinds of information: Student identifying, parent names and current address, student's special interests, special programs of student involvement, high school credit accrual, health screenings and related treatments, inoculations and immunizations, chronic conditions, school attendance history and standardized test and special academic program scores.

3. The Uniform Migrant Student Medical Transfer Form (MR) was designed to be used by medical professionals in reporting medical abnormalities about each migrant child whom they serve. This record contains a detailed health problem list that was designed in collaboration with and sanctioned by the American Academy of Pediatrics. It is a unique provision of MSRTS to enable the medical profession to rapidly communicate from one community to another the problems and precise treatment status about the medical problems of migrant children.

Through the use of information provided by MSRTS, school officials are now able to provide continuity in the educational efforts of migrant children as they move from school to school both within a state and between states. Each school gets a listing of special programs in which each student was involved in his previous school. The student may be immediately placed in the same type program; and, in some cases, he may pick up exactly where he left off at his previous school. A relatively new educational development known as "criterion based programs" make this precise continuity possible. Another example of data utilization is the continuation of treatments relative to a health abnormality that was started but not completed at a previous school.

The history of MSRTS has witnessed many incidents where a child was diagnosed as having a condition that required immediate treatment, even surgery, but had to move to another school before the treatment procedure was started. The last school simply entered the appropriate information in the child's computer record making it immediately available to the next school where, upon perusal of the child's record, the current school of enrollment will take steps to correct the abnormality. Another example of this kind of service is when a terminal operator serving a child's last school will notify MSRTS in Little Rock about the movement

of a child with his destination either known or unknown. If known, the information is immediately given to the receiving school through the respective state director of migrant education. If unknown, an all points alert is sent through the MSRTS communications system so school personnel, in the nations' 8500 participating school districts, will be on the lookout for the child either upon enrollment in a school or upon a visit by a community aide to his residence which many times is in a migrant labor camp.

It is appropriate at this point to address the subject of safeguards of privacy of information. This is a justifiable point of high sensitivity among the American population because of the current use and misuse of data banks. The need for data privacy as well as the right of students and parents to have access to student records has been paramount in MSRTS since its inception in 1969. Among the initial recommendations for record usage that was established by the states was for a copy of each student's record to be given to the student upon his withdrawal. This, obviously, was not always realized because many times the children move without announcing their departure. It has, nevertheless been an intent to provide this information service to migratory parents and children.

The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA 74) legally recognized the rights of parents and children to the review of childrens' school records and it limits access to certain educational agencies. Each school has the responsibility of complying with FERPA 74. The position of MSRTS relative to PERPA 74 is that MSRTS in only an administrative extension of the educational agencies which provide scholastic and health services for migratory children; therefore MSRTS is not obligated to directly honor parent or student requests for student data. Requests for such data are to be made to the local school which may subsequently request a student's record from the MSRTS Central Depository located in Little Rock, Arkansas.

With the almost immediate availability of pertinent information, the services that may be provided for farm and fishing migrant children are limited only by human imagination and money. It is hoped that America will adopt a self-imposed requirement to provide the same life options for these children that it does for other children. The MSRTS serves as a vehicle through which the educational and medical communities may more effectively serve the critical needs of all migrant children. It is another major educational development in U.S. history and is made possible only through the marriage of education and technology supported by federal aid to education and the voluntary cooperation of the 48 states and Puerto Rico which are a part of MSRTS.